BAR Conference, Glasgow
AGM 16h May 2025
President, Director General and Chairman Reports

Presidents Report
Mike Andrews

I am thrilled to be writing this year's report in a state of mild euphoria after attending the Parliamentary Reception celebrating 125 years of BAR. Not only was it a great privilege to attend an event at the Houses of Parliament, but it also showcased the serious and professional side of our Association and its tireless efforts to represent the best interests of the membership at the highest levels of government.

Personally, I had the opportunity to talk to (bend the ear of?) one MP who was genuinely interested in the effects of Low Emission Zones on our businesses and the impact of the VAT threshold, both in terms of rogue operators and HMRC's tax take. This dialogue has continued beyond the event. Additionally, a business opportunity for a part load to France for a member of the Upper House was welcomed……..

You will see much more detailed coverage of the evening elsewhere, but I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks on behalf of the Members to Ian and the team at Watford for organizing such a memorable event. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Chris Seaton, our external affairs representative, who works tirelessly and effectively behind the scenes.

It is the opinion of the current Board and myself that a growing quality membership is crucial to the long-term future of BAR. Our base membership currently stands at 363 members and 130 branches, totalling 493. While this is down from last year's 502, it is slightly up from the year before. The trend of consolidation continues, with branches rising as a proportion of the whole. We currently have 11 open applications from prospective new Members. We have introduced a couple of small changes that seem to be appreciated by new Members: a personal visit from a Board member to welcome them to membership and help them navigate "what's on," and an invitation to all new Members/attendees to a short reception with the Board held before the main conference. This was a great success last year.

I firmly believe that if a core objective of our Association is to be heard, recognized, and most importantly, listened to by policymakers, we must be representative of the professional, quality moving and storing industry. Similarly, if we wish to be recognized by the public, having more high-quality members extolling the benefits of BAR membership is essential.

Over the past year, we have seen continued success in restarting meetings within certain areas that had ceased to meet for various reasons. Fourteen of our fifteen Areas are now meeting again in reasonable numbers. I would like to extend my gratitude to those Members who have "picked up the baton" and freely given their time to take on the various roles and responsibilities necessary to make these meetings a success. The staff at Watford have supported this initiative well and remain open to requests for further support.

Change has been a constant companion for as long as I can remember, and the year ahead will be no different. The Association will bid a fond farewell to Ian Studd, its Director General for the past ten years. Ian has been a wonderful ambassador for the Association, both internally with its Members and externally with the broader stakeholders with whom we regularly interact. Personally, I will miss working with him immensely.

However, as one door closes, another invariably opens and I look forward to welcoming Andrew Large, who will join as Director General in August this year. Andrew brings over twenty-five years of experience in trade association leadership, most recently spending eight years leading the Confederation of Paper Industries.

I also look forward to handing over to your new president, Sarah Cole, the Managing Director of Universal Commercial Relocation Ltd. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Sarah over the past years and am confident she will be an excellent President during this time of change.

In closing, I would like to once again extend my heartfelt gratitude for the dedication and professionalism of the team at Watford and the countless volunteers throughout the Association and its Affiliates. Your efforts and unwavering commitment are the lifeblood of this wonderful Association.

As we move forward through 2025, let us embrace the changes and challenges that lie ahead with confidence and unity. Together, we will continue to uphold the values and standards that make BAR a beacon of excellence in the industry. Best wishes for a successful and prosperous year ahead.

Director Generals Report
Ian Studd

As always, 2024 was again a busy and productive year with good progress made in pursuing the strategies of the Board of Directors as well as extending the range of support services that the Association provides to its Members.

There has been much focus on refreshing and upgrading the website and on improving our social media output and content with positive steps forward having been made with both. We have simplified and improved on the experience for those consumers visiting the website and, at the same time, added more consumer facing content. Analytics show that the BAR website is now generating an average of 850 direct contacts per month from consumers to Members which, although not unreasonable, is still a work in progress.

Training output has also increased and, as well as continuing to deliver training across a broad range of subject matter both in the classroom and online, we have added to our course content library with specific modules designed for our Overseas Group, our Workplace Relocation Group and of course the Young Movers Group. Furthermore, and in line with the Board's strategy to design and implement the next stage of management training (ie what follows the Removals Masterclass), we are working on a new modular based course aimed at middle to senior management grades which we hope to have ready for intake for 2026.

It is with enormous pride that we can also now boast of having our own, industry bespoke, Apprenticeship Standard that has allowed us to launch the BAR Academy in partnership with TRS Training and which provides tangible opportunities for career progression through multiple routes, operational, administrational, sales etc. This will undoubtedly assist with the recruitment and retention strategies and needs of our Members. At the time of writing this report, I can confirm that there have been 76 'expressions of interest' from employers wishing to engage with the scheme that have so far delivered 54 enrolments which I am sure you will agree is encouraging. The BAR and TRS are currently working on collateral to share with careers fairs and events.

Our focus on having a comprehensive Public Affairs strategy that is uniquely our own has continued throughout 2024 with good progress made since the general election in the summer to establish meaningful contacts within all the new Parliamentarians and major Government departments, as well as other regulatory bodies and stakeholders. The recent Parliamentary Reception, the first one hosted by the BAR in its long history, demonstrated just how far we have come in developing those collaborative working relationships that can and will stand us in very good stead as we continue to pursue our own policy manifesto agenda for the benefit of our Members and their customers. A crucial extension to this work following the recent election is adding a focussed approach to representing the needs of our Members across the Devolved Nations with specific strategies with that work being well underway.

Growth remains a central pillar of the Board's strategy and although we have slightly fewer 'full' Members in December 2024 than we did in December 2023, consolidation in the market means that we have almost exactly the same number of 'locations' across that same sample period. We again added new Members in each of the other categories of membership across the Association and our pipeline of interest from those wishing to join the ranks of the BAR remains very healthy.

I am on record as saying that one of the most enjoyable elements of the Director General's job is in attending the Area Meetings and having meaningful engagement directly with our Members. It is therefore hugely encouraging that we have experienced a sustainable resurgence in face-to-face meetings in all but one of the Areas, and the Board is working hard to find a solution to that particular anomaly. It is true to say that although the meetings have generally become less formal and much more conversational in tone, they still deliver enormous value through networking and knowledge

sharing opportunities. I am extremely grateful to the 'officers' of the Areas who give of their time to support the Association with ensuring engagement in a way that is critical to its continued success. The team at Watford have also worked hard to support the areas in any way they can and will of course continue to do so.

This will be my last report as your Director General as I head into retirement in September after having served for ten years in the role, and in August we will be welcoming Andrew Large to the BAR as its next Director General. Andrew has a proven track record of leadership with Trade Associations and is without doubt an excellent appointment. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the Board of Directors (past and present) for their unwavering support and guidance during my term of office, to the team at Watford for their hard work, and loyalty throughout those ten years, and finally to you the BAR Members, for your continued commitment to the Association.

In the meantime, I hope to catch up with as many of you as possible between now and September, either at Area Meetings or at Conference or separately as the opportunity arises.

Chairman's Report
Richard Dolan

As we reflect on another successful but tough trading year at BAR Services, it is important to remind ourselves and our valued Members of who we are and what we stand for. BAR Services is a wholly owned subsidiary of the British Association of Removers (BAR). This unique structure ensures that all profits generated by our operations directly support the financial strength and ongoing development of the Association. We are not just your average packing materials supplier. We are a dedicated part of the BAR, a small team of five based in Sussex, passionate about helping Members thrive while maintaining the highest standards of professionalism.

In 2024, we have continued to ensure that we remain ahead of the curve in terms of government legislation, particularly in relation to sustainability. One of our key achievements this year was creating a baseline of sustainability information for our products and offering support to our customers to help them complete tenders. We also took significant steps to ease the burden of compliance for our Members, especially concerning the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). For example, we secured confirmation that removals boxes are 'non-obligated' under the EPR scheme, **meaning no additional reporting or cost for our Members**. However, we continue to advocate for a re-evaluation of the plastic packaging tax as it pertains to our industry, as many of our products are designed for long-term reuse.

Our presence at Area Meetings and industry conferences has been invaluable in expanding our knowledge and understanding of evolving industry needs. We have also worked hard to expand our stock and service offerings to cover more geographical areas and ensure timely delivery to all Members. Product innovation remains a key focus, particularly in sourcing sustainable solutions tailored to the removals industry. Additionally, we have reviewed our GDPR policy, and we encourage all Members to re-subscribe to our mailing list using the QR code provided.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the continued support of the Board of Directors, who have played an instrumental role in driving the company forward.

Thank you for your continued partnership, and we look forward to another successful year together.

Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Emma Lane

I must firstly start by thanking all those involved within the RBA either as a Trustee or a Committee member – all volunteering their time freely. Mark Taylor, Gavin McCarthy and I continue to be trustees, and we now have Sue Hayes to help us assess the applications and make the awards. We have come together as a team quite recently due to retirements and I believe that we are cohesive as a unit.

We have additional members within our committee of Anthony Groves, Daniel Braddock, Dave Ewart, Abigail Podgson and Greg Wildman. We are most appreciative to be able to call on the committee should we need assistance.

Currently, the claims are assessed in a very collaborative manner ensuring that all views are considered. This is turn guarantees the best outcome for the claimant and that the due process for the RBA is maintained. There have been some difficult claims within the year and to be able to share decision making in this way is definitely most effective.

Our aim as a charity is to ensure swift assistance is given to those in need. We have claims of a varied nature, from past and present employees of BAR members. 2024 proved to be not the busiest in terms of the number of claims, but there were some very emotive claims. Whilst the number of claims seemed to fall, the amount paid to the claimants was substantially increased due to the nature of them. The beginning of 2025 has been quite active with claims which the trustees have dealt with seamlessly.

Again, BAR members continue to support the RBA most generously. The annual conference always exceeds expectation and the monthly support from areas together with those giving their time to find ways of raising money to support our charity is wonderful. All the trustees – except myself! - have endeavoured to raise funds themselves and I am most grateful for this. The Young Movers have been very supportive of our charity partaking in a Beach Clean and Abigail Pogson participating in the UWCB charity boxing event!

I continue to be heartened by contributions made to the charity and this has enabled us not to have to fall upon our investments ensuring that we remain in a strong position and can be generous when needed with the awards.

We shall endeavour to continue doing our utmost to support those in need and special thanks should be given to those at BAR Watford who assist with this. In particular, Ian Studd, Tracey Hoodless, Agnes Ring and Tracy Britten.

BAR APG Scheme Trust Chairman's Report
Robert Bartup

2024 was something of a landmark for your Advanced Payment Guarantee Scheme. We paid off the remainder of the loans so generously provided by a handful of Members that enabled the scheme to get off the ground. So in 8 years of our existence, we have managed to repay, with interest, £192,000 loaned by Members, handled 12 financial failures and accepted claims on 6 of them which have cost the Fund £250,000. We have managed to end up with £400,000 invested through Charles Stanley and £60,000 in cash in the bank. Quite a success story but before anyone complains about the cost, can I just report that we have managed to run a scheme that has covered the whole association membership for less than the Overseas Group Members were paying alone to IMMI.

Part of the "secret formula" is, of course, that BAR sets meaningful financial standards for its Members and monitors those rigorously. In that way, the risk of failure is reduced but not eliminated. Secondly, of course, this Fund is run on carbon neutral volunteer labour. The Fund has few costs other than claims. BAR provides all the support free-of-charge too, both in terms of day-to-day administration and when the dirty stuff hits the fan.

Our biggest expense in 2024 was dealing with the financially disadvantaged customers unfortunate enough to have been customers of Phillips of Chippenham, trading as Britannia Quickmove. Claims made out to their customers came to just over £17,000. Similarly, we paid out just over £2,000 to one disadvantaged customer at G&R Removals in Newcastle. Britannia Quickmove, like many Members, were carrying out international moves and were being paid in advance but had not bought cover for worldwide moving. We were therefore unable to deal with those claims and Britannia PLC dealt with the disadvantaged international customers. This ability to "pick and choose" the level of cover remains a weakness of the scheme and needs further consideration at BAR level.

Looking forward and anticipating that Members probably would like the levy to be reduced, we do feel we need to look again at the cash limits per claim and per year that we put into the scheme at the beginning of the Covid pandemic. If we do remove those cash limits, then we need to be sure that the Fund is big enough and stable enough to be able to deal with multiple possible claims in the same year or in consecutive years. I think it is fair to say we would have some reservations whether the Fund was big enough if the limit were withdrawn.

As always, I should pay tribute to my fellow Trustees and their input and wisdom. They are Tony Tickner, Nick Kerr and Ian Palmer representing the Overseas Group and Ed Kessell and Paul Fox representing the National and European Group. My thanks should also go to Tracy Britten and the rest of the BAR staff for the way that they deal not only with our day-to-day admin but with the claims on the Fund and the near claims.

Finally, I should report that we have had a claim from a customer of Eagle Relocation who paid them while they were a BAR Member and well before they financially failed. While strictly speaking we view this as being outside the wording of the Advanced Payment Guarantee Scheme, we think that the sum of money involved is probably less than the risk of reputational damage and we have, therefore, indicated that we will consider a claim. There may be others that come out of the woodwork as well, but we will see. As always, we will keep our fingers crossed that we won't get any more financial failures in the year, but I am afraid history tells us that financial failures are an ever present issue.

QSS Chairman's Report
Dominic Murray

Last year was another excellent year for QSS that saw an increase in business and profitability as we push to improve both sales and training services. David Woodhouse and his team continue to grow the business and develop contacts and leads on a continuous basis.

During economic turbulence, no company is immune from complaints and this year will see QSS offering training in Complaints Handling and Customer Care in organisations covering both the topic of complaints handling as well as offering some guidance to delegates about the requirements of the BS 8543 standard all to improve the professionalism of our industry.

In 2025, we will continue to support the removals industry and as we all face the challenges of increased costs due to changes in National Insurance thresholds by holding our pricing at last year's rates.

I would like to thank the team and QSS Board of Directors for their support over the last 12 months and I would in particular wish to thank Ian Studd for his support to QSS and wish him well in the next chapter of life.